



SELLING TO SCHOOLS A COMPLETE GUIDE

**MORE THAN
WORDS** **MARKETING**

More Than Words' ultimate guide to tapping into
the UK's valuable education sector.

CONTENTS

03

Introduction

04

Types of school

07

Funding

08

Selling to schools

12

Marketing to schools

16

Understanding the buying cycle for your products and services

INTRODUCTION

Even in times of economic uncertainty, schools are a necessary public service which will always be in the market for new products and services especially when confronted by budget cuts.

If you can become a trusted supplier within the education sector, this will open the door to repeat income streams for your company in a domino marketplace – once one school becomes a customer, more will follow.

The key to successfully selling to schools is to understand how your products or services could be used to solve the challenges of the education sector.

Direct marketing puts you in control of the relationship you have with schools. You decide who you contact, what your message is, and how it is delivered.

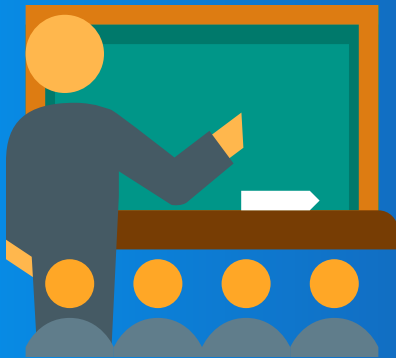
Once you have opened a channel of communication, you can find out more about the buying cycle of each school, plan your content to address common pain points, and offer a solution at the appropriate time.

In this e-guide, we provide a brief but comprehensive guide to selling to schools, putting you on the right path to successful sales and marketing in this lucrative sector.

TYPES OF SCHOOL

There are many different types of school in the UK available for you to target. Knowing the differences between them will help you understand why your products and services might be more suitable for some types of school over others.

There are two general distinctions on the different kinds of school in the UK:



The age of the students attending the school

In most of the country, children aged between 4 and 11 go to primary schools with children aged 11 to 16 going to secondary schools.

In a few areas of the country, there is a three tier system for ages 4 to 9, 9 to 13, and 13 to 16.



How the school is funded

Schools are mainly funded by the government, paid for by fees, or a mixture of both.

Academies

Academies are state schools independent of local government control which receive funds directly from the government. How much they have to spend is based on a formula calculated by the DfE but the amount per pupil will be similar to nearby schools controlled by the local authority. Academies have full flexibility to allocate funds as deemed fit including services normally provided by their governing council.

Free School

A free school is new state-funded school and is independent – they are not controlled by councils. They are set up by teachers, parents, existing schools, educational charities, universities or community groups. They are held accountable through a 'funding agreement' – a contract with central Government.

City Technology Colleges

A city technology college (CTC) is a state-funded secondary schools with no entry exams and which charges no fee but which is free from control of councils. The DfE contributes 80% of capital costs with the remaining 20% normally comes from private sponsors who lease or own the building and land occupied by the CTC.

Special Schools

Children with special educational needs who have a EHCP attend special schools. Provision of special schools varies, some are maintained schools, others are academies or private special schools

Multi Academy Trusts

A Multi Academy Trust is responsible for the operation of two or more academy schools. They are not funded by their local authority – they're funded direct by the Department of Education and have full flexibility on how and where they choose to allocate funds.

Maintained Schools

Maintained schools are overseen by local government. Maintained schools are funded directly by the local authority. The amount spent per pupil varies significantly by the local authority. Each school is free to allocate all funds received but some money is held back to pay for the authority's "central services".

Community Schools

A community school is a school which are controlled and run by the local council. Local councils employ the staff, own the land and buildings, and determines the admissions arrangements.

Foundation Schools & Trust Schools

Foundation and trust schools are schools operated and controlled by their own governing body. The governing body employs the staff and sets its own admissions criteria. The land and buildings are usually owned by the governing body or, in trust schools, a charity.

Grammar Schools

Grammar schools are state funded schools which select their pupils on the basis of academic ability. Grammar schools can also be maintained schools.

Independent Schools/Private Schools

Independent/private schools (sometimes known as public schools) are schools which charge fees to attend, rather than being funded by the government, and can make a profit although they are mainly charitable in nature.

They are governed and operated by the school itself. They are lightly regulated by government and inspected by a range of regulatory agencies.

Independent schools/private schools are funded by fees, gifts and endowments and are governed by an independently elected board of governors.



Boarding Schools

There are over 500 boarding schools in the UK. At a boarding school, most children live at the school during term time however some schools are now opening themselves up to receive daytime pupils who return home at the end of the day.

Some boarding schools are privately-run establishments which require the payment of a fee by parents or carers to attend.

There are some state-run boarding schools, most of which are academies with a handful being run as maintained schools and free schools.



HOW DOES FUNDING WORK IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR?

General school funding

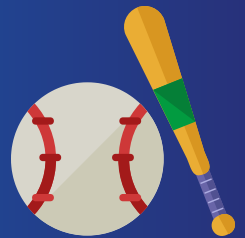
The general annual grant is paid direct to the school from central government. For academies and free schools this is paid as equal payments throughout the year, on the first working day of each month.

Local authority maintained schools can choose equal monthly payments or three payments a year, normally 40% in April, 35% in September, and 25% in January.



PE & sports premium payments

PE & sports premium payments are £8,000 for a school with 17 or more pupils and £500 a pupil for smaller schools are paid to the local authority first and then transferred to the school in two payments, one towards the start of the Autumn term, and the other in April or May.



High needs payments

Pupils requiring High Needs Funding (HNF) are those that experience a combination of substantial or severe difficulties in the areas of communication, cognitive development, social emotional & mental health, physical difficulty and/or sensory impairment.

The application process requires schools to submit an online request for each high needs pupil whose cost of education provision will exceed £6,000 per annum. High Needs Funding is not a reimbursement of actual costs but an additional resource to support a school to meet the pupil's high level of special educational needs.

These payments are usually paid monthly directly to the school by the local authority.



SELLING TO SCHOOLS

There are many reasons company owners and senior management are reluctant to actively attempt selling to schools.

Commonly, their biggest concerns are:



Whether they have to join a suppliers' list
(they don't),



If they have to drop their prices to compete
(they don't – value is more important
than price to this market),



If they have to wait a long time to be paid
(they don't – schools are legally obliged to pay
suppliers within 30 days).

When a company's management do make the decision to target the education sector, we at More Than Words are often asked which are the most effective ways of getting a foot in the door. Our expertise helps to devise and deliver a marketing plan so that they promote themselves to the right people, who have the authority to purchase their products and services.

For short-term and immediate results, we always answer "direct marketing".

Selling to schools

What do schools buy?

What schools buy can be separated into two main areas:

1

Educational products and services which are used by teachers and other leaders to educate students and pupils.

2

Non-educational products and services which are for the general running of the school.

WHO MAKES THE BUYING DECISIONS WITHIN SCHOOLS?

In Primary schools

The final decision on spending comes down to the Head Teacher. They usually take advice from key members of staff known as heads of years and coordinators.

Coordinators generally focus on different subject areas, as well as SEN (Special Educational Needs) and their purchasing needs are more centered on students rather than the wider school needs.

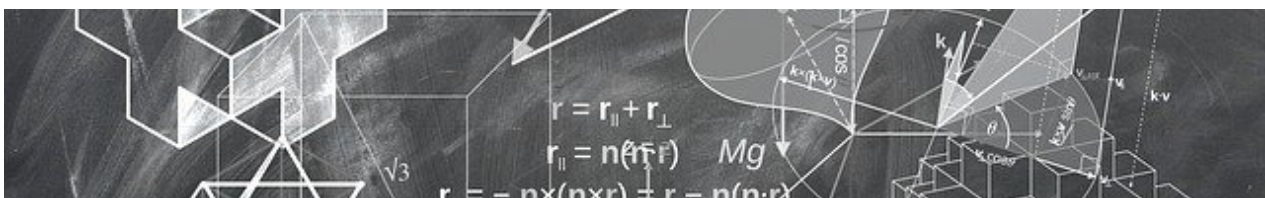
In Secondary schools

The headteacher is only one decision maker within secondary schools although s/he is the most senior and usually gives final approval on spending.

Budgets are much higher than for other educational establishments and, normally, the head teacher will allocate a certain amount per department per annum which is then administered by the heads of those departments. Secondary schools can have many heads of department – the number is often related to the size of school as measured in pupil numbers.

Administrators, Bursars and Business Managers now control spending in many areas like school efficiency. School business managers are the senior financial and administrative contacts within many secondary schools. Their main job, in conjunction with the Head teacher, is to allocate resources and budgets efficiently.

So, if you are involved in value-driven services (for example, services on contract) rather than something value-added (for example, teaching aids), the school business manager may be the best person for you to send your message to.



HOW DO I MARKET MY PRODUCT OR SERVICE TO SCHOOLS?

What strategy should you use to secure clients in the education sector?

No matter which marketing strategy you choose, you need to achieve the following four goals to generate the maximum return:



To build trust in your company or brand, your company needs to be recognised by head teachers, school leaders, business managers, teaching staff, and other decision makers and influencers as taking the education market seriously.

You need to show that you understand the challenges of working in an education environment and demonstrate how the different solutions you're offering will help overcome them.



The information you create for school leaders, educators, and administrators should be informative and contain information of real value to the readers and answer the questions they may have about your products or services.

You need to be seen regularly – the education marketplace is a competitive one and head teachers, educators, and administrators need to be familiar with and trust your company.



SELLING TO SCHOOLS

A DOMINO MARKETPLACE

The education sector is a domino marketplace.

Headteachers are in frequent communication with each other so when one school buys from you, and they have a good experience with your company, they take the time to tell colleagues in other Schools how you have helped, thus opening up referral opportunities.

It is therefore worth spending the time and making the effort to secure your first few sales from the education sector. So, how do you go about it?

MARKETING TO SCHOOLS – SHORT TERM

If you're starting from a customer base of zero schools or you want to find education customers quickly, direct marketing is one of the most effective and profitable way to generate leads and achieve sales.

While direct marketing is a way to locate customers quickly, the key to making it work best is to make your message easy for people to understand and easy for them to get in touch with you (either by email or a phone call).

The three most popular marketing approaches to schools are by email, telephone, and post.

Direct contact with schools – proactive contact – makes a difference. Direct contact can bring decisions forward as well as cementing the authority and credibility of your company and its brand in decision makers' minds.

DIRECT MARKETING - THREE PROMINENT APPROACHES



Email marketing

Email marketing one of the most popular ways for companies to get their promotional messages into schools.

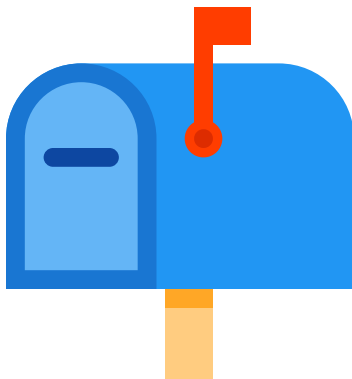
Once you've purchased your email list, the process of sending campaigns is simple, particularly with an email service provider. If you want to send off your own email campaigns, you can use email marketing software.



Telephone marketing

Telephone marketing to schools is popular not only for finding strong leads but, during each call, you can ascertain from the decision makers you're speaking with about their immediate and future needs for your product or service.

You can collect key information like who their current supplier is, what they're paying, how long is left on their contract, and when would be the best date to call back with a view to presenting a full proposal. This means that, every month, the marketing and sales staff have a database of warm leads to pitch.



Postal marketing

Until around the mid-2000s, postal marketing to schools was the most popular way to promote your company and what it sells to the education sector.

Although volumes have returned to nowhere near what they were, response rates are higher than in previous decades because:

- there are still fewer letters going into school offices now and
- teachers, like a large proportion of the population, still value having something tangible they can hold.

CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGIES

Here are six medium- to long-term content marketing strategies to help ensure that decision makers within the education sector find sales-driven, benefits-led details on what you're promoting:



1

Create a library of blogs and articles – when decision makers search, ensure that it's your company they find

2

Build up your number of case studies and testimonials

3

Launch a social media marketing campaign – an increasing number of decision makers in the education sector now engage on social media networks

4

Content distribution – be found on the 3rd party websites your audience respects and appreciates

5

Send regular email newsletters

6

Create long-form content like white papers

UNDERSTAND THE BUYING CYCLE

FOR YOUR PRODUCTS & SERVICES

No matter which marketing strategy companies use to make sales in the education sector, they are all subject to the buying cycle.

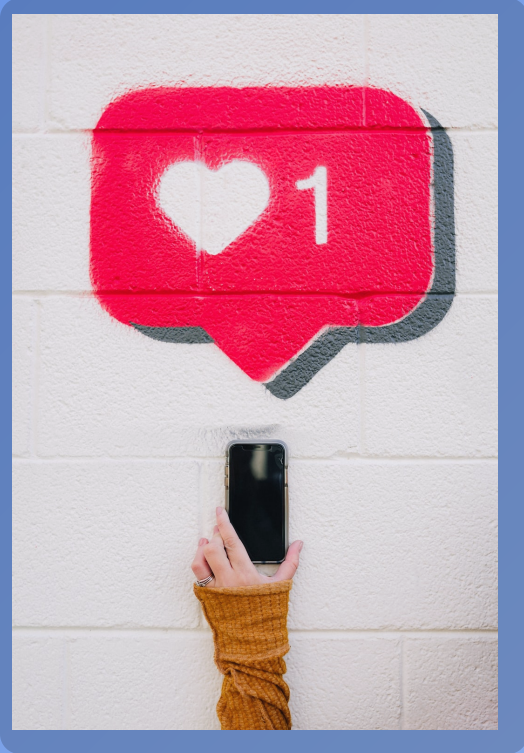
For every 100 educational establishments you contact through a direct marketing campaign, only 2-3 will be in the market at that time.

For example, let's say you provide mini-buses to educational establishments. As you know, most mini-buses are taken out on a 2-3 year lease. Unless a school needs another bus during the period of the 2-3 year lease, there is no marketing campaign which will entice them to break their existing lease and incur a penalty to get a replacement bus.

You should make sure that each email or postal marketing campaign you carry out is designed to appeal to educational establishments in that short window of time when they're ready to consider another mini-bus.

With a telemarketing campaign you can identify when they will be in the market, note this down so you can contact them then – creating perfect sales leads for your team to follow up and much more easy for them to close.

CONTINUALLY BUILD UP YOUR COMPANY'S PROFILE



A school relies on public money for its funding and head teachers and school business managers have to demonstrate that funding is spent wisely and within the government's rules.

To a lesser degree, heads of form, heads of subject, IT managers, and so on must justify how they spend the budgets they've been allocated by their head teacher.

Decision makers within schools need to see that you're committed to the education sector and that this is not just part of a plan to make money from them as quickly as possible.

Be seen by them every month – contact them by email, phone, or post and let the decision makers who are at different parts of their buying journey find the facts they want online with your informative, generous, easy-to-find, marketing messages or material.

Let them know as much about your company and what it sells so that when a need arises they know who to approach and have confidence in who you are and what you provide.

"Incredibly professional service.

Been a pleasure to work with to date, always available, always keen to help.

Highly recommend as a source of quality data and services to go with it!."

"We have worked with Clare for many years and always received the best service. They are honest, reliable and with excellent quality data. Certainly recommend them!"

"We have dealt with More Than Words for around 12 months now, nothing is too much to ask and Clare is always extremely helpful and knowledgeable providing us with what we need whenever we need it! Definitely the best on the market."



**Find out more.
Call 0330 010 8300**

**MORE THAN
WORDS** **MARKETING**

**info@morethanwordsuk.co.uk
www.morethanwordsuk.co.uk**