



# How to design and implement a communication plan for each stage of the admissions funnel

Unlock the Secrets of a Winning Admissions Funnel: Proven Strategies to Design and Execute Flawless Communication at Every Stage



# Introduction

Navigating the complexities of private school admissions requires more than just understanding your prospective families; it involves crafting a communication plan that resonates at every stage of their journey. From the initial expression of interest to the final decision, each step in the admissions funnel presents unique opportunities for engagement and connection. This guide is designed to arm you with the strategies and insights needed to create a powerful and effective communications strategy, tailored to the specific stages of the admissions funnel.

In this guide, you'll discover:

- How to identify and leverage key performance indicators (KPIs) at each stage.
- The importance of data-driven decision-making in shaping your communication strategies.
- Tips for continuously evaluating and adapting your communication plan for maximum effectiveness.

Armed with these insights, you'll be well-equipped to enhance the admissions experience, turning interested leads into enrolled students. Let's dive into the first stage: communicating with "Enquired" leads.



# Section 1: Communicating with “Enquired” Leads

In this stage, your goal is to build a foundation of trust and interest, using data-driven insights to guide your communication strategy effectively.

When a prospective family takes that first step to express interest in your school, they enter the “Enquired” stage. This initial interaction is more than a mere transaction; it's the opening of a dialogue, an opportunity to start a relationship built on understanding and mutual interest.





## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

In this stage, focus on KPIs that reflect the effectiveness of your initial engagement:

- Inquiry Response Rate: How many of the inquiries are you able to engage in meaningful conversation?
- Content Engagement Metrics: Are the resources you provide (e.g., brochures, virtual tours) being utilized?
- Conversion to Application Rate: What percentage of inquiries move on to apply?

## Advanced Data Utilization

Utilizing data effectively at this stage can significantly improve engagement. Consider integrating a CRM system that can track interactions with your content, from email opens to website visits. This allows you to segment your audience based on their actions and interests, leading to more personalized follow-up strategies.

## Leveraging Technology for Personalized Communication

Personalization at scale is achievable through technology. Automated email sequences, when used smartly, can feel personal and relevant. Tools like dynamic content insertion can change parts of the email based on the recipient's previous interactions with your school's digital content, ensuring that each communication feels individually tailored.

## Strategic Timing and Frequency

The balance here is critical. An immediate response to an inquiry sets a positive tone. Subsequent communications should be paced to maintain engagement without overwhelming. Utilize tools that can schedule follow-ups based on user interaction, sending reminders or additional information when a prospect interacts with certain content on your website or social media.

## Utilizing Effective Channels Wisely

- Email: For direct, personalized communication. Segment your email list based on the data gathered to tailor the message.
- Social Media: To create a sense of community and belonging. Showcase student life, events, and success stories.
- Webinars and Virtual Tours: Offer interactive experiences that give a real feel of the school environment.
- Event Sign Ups: Offer a frictionless process for leads to book a visit your school and see your program in action

# Section 2: Engaging “Applied” and “Completed” Applicants

In this stage, your strategy should be centered around supportive, informative, and reassuring communication, leveraging data to personalize and optimize the experience for each applicant.

**Fostering Engagement Post-Application:** Once a lead has transitioned to an applicant, the communication focus shifts to maintaining engagement and guiding them towards completing their application requirements.



# Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Application Completion Rate: Tracking the percentage of applicants who complete all requirements.
- Time to Completion: Monitoring the average time taken by applicants to move from “Applied” to “Completed” status.
- Applicant Engagement Levels: Measuring interactions with follow-up communications and resources.

## Data-Driven Application Support

Use data from your CRM to understand where applicants might need additional support. Identify common drop-off points in the application process and develop targeted communications to address these challenges.

## Personalized Email Sequences

Develop email sequences that respond to the applicant's actions. For instance, if an applicant has not completed a certain step, an automated email offering assistance or resources can be triggered.

## Optimizing Communication Timing

Timing plays a crucial role in keeping applicants engaged and moving forward. Schedule regular check-ins and reminders based on the typical timeline of your application process. These communications should be encouraging and supportive, reducing the perceived burden of the application process.

## Utilizing Various Channels for Engagement

- Email: Primary tool for personalized, direct communication.
- SMS and Chatbots: For timely reminders and quick queries.
- Virtual Q&A Sessions: Providing applicants a platform to ask questions and get real-time responses.



# Completing the Application Cycle

As applicants move to the “Completed” stage, acknowledge their efforts and inform them about the next steps. This communication should convey excitement about their potential inclusion in your school community and provide clarity on what to expect next.

# Section 3: Navigating “Offered,” “Rejected,” and “Wait- listed” Decisions

In this stage, the focus is on empathetic, clear, and data-informed communication that respects the emotional context of each decision.



**Communicating Admissions Decisions:** The way a school communicates its admissions decisions can significantly impact its reputation and relationship with applicants. This stage requires a blend of transparency, empathy, and clarity.



# Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Feedback from Applicants: Measuring the satisfaction level of all applicants with the communication process.
- Engagement of Wait-listed Applicants: Monitoring the interest levels of wait-listed applicants in remaining on the wait list.

## Utilizing Data for Decision Communication

Analyzing historical Enrolment Rates (the percentage of offer holders who enroll) can help inform the number of students you can safely admit without exceeding your capacity. This data can also help to structure conversations with waitlisted families about the likelihood of any spaces becoming available

## Personalized Communication Strategies

- For Offered Applicants: Celebratory and welcoming messages that make them feel valued and excited about joining the school community. Be sure to include upcoming opportunities or events for newly offered families to engage with the broader school community.
- For Rejected Applicants: Respectful and encouraging communication that offers feedback, where appropriate, and potential alternative paths or future considerations.
- For Wait-listed Applicants: Clear communication about their status, next steps, and what they can expect. Regular updates to keep them engaged and informed.

## Timing and Channels

- Email and Letters: Formal communications for decisions. Ensure timely delivery post-decision.
- Phone Calls: For offered applicants, a personal phone call can enhance the positive experience.
- Web Portals: For continuous updates, especially for wait-listed applicants.



# Continuous Engagement and Feedback Loop

For all decision types, consider implementing a feedback loop. This could be a short survey to gather insights on their experience with your admissions process, which can be invaluable for future improvements.

# Section 4: Securing “Enrolled” Status and Post- Decision Communication

This stage is about cementing the relationship with the new members of your school community, ensuring they feel welcomed, informed, and excited about their upcoming journey.



**Turning Offers into Enrollments:** The journey from offering a place to securing an enrollment is pivotal. This stage is about reinforcing the decision to choose your school and nurturing a sense of belonging.



## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Enrollment Rate: The percentage of offered applicants who enroll.
- Time to Enrollment: The duration between offer acceptance and enrollment confirmation.
- Post-Decision Engagement: Interaction levels with post-decision communications and events.

## Data-Driven Enrollment Engagement

Utilize data to understand what influences an applicant's decision to enroll. This could include analyzing responses to different types of follow-up communications or engagement with school community events.

## Personalized Enrollment Communication

- Craft messages that are not only congratulatory but also informative about the next steps.
- Use data to personalize communications, perhaps mentioning aspects of the school that particularly resonated with them during the application process.

## Leveraging Multiple Channels

- Email and Phone Calls: For formal and personal communications regarding enrollment steps.
- Welcome Packages: Physical or digital packages that include detailed information about the school, next steps, and invitations to upcoming events.
- Social Media and Online Communities: Encourage joining school-related social media groups or online forums to start building connections within the community.

## Post-Decision Community Building

After enrollment, focus on integrating families into the school community:

- Orientation Programs: Introduce new families to the school's culture, values, and community.
- Regular Updates: Keep them informed and engaged with ongoing school activities and events.
- Feedback Surveys: Regular check-ins to understand their evolving perceptions and experiences.

# Section 5: Handling “Withdrawn” and “Declined” Leads

This stage requires a delicate balance, utilizing data to understand and respect the decisions of families, while maintaining a positive, ongoing relationship.



**Navigating Withdrawn Interest:** When a lead indicates they are no longer interested, it's an opportunity to gather valuable feedback. Understanding why families opt out can inform future improvements in your admissions process.



## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- **Withdrawal Reasons:** Categorize and analyze the reasons for withdrawal.
- **Feedback Response Rate:** Measure how many withdrawn leads provide feedback.
- **Re-engagement Rate:** Track any withdrawn leads that re-engage at a later stage.
- **Withdrawal Stage:** Track the rate of withdrawn interest pre and post an offer of admission

## Data-Driven Feedback Collection

Implement a system to collect feedback automatically when a lead withdraws. This can be a short survey triggered by their withdrawal action. Analyze this data to identify patterns or common concerns, which can be addressed in future communications or admissions strategies.

## Leveraging CRM for Insightful Follow-ups

Use your CRM to maintain a history of interactions with withdrawn leads. This history can be invaluable for tailoring any future re-engagement efforts, should they express interest again.

## Timing and Communication Channels

Post-withdrawal, it's important to respect their decision. A single, well-crafted email acknowledging their decision and offering an opportunity for feedback respects their choice while leaving the door open for future communication.

## Handling “Declined” Leads

For leads that have declined an offer of admission, the approach should be more about maintaining a positive relationship. They might consider your school again in the future or could refer others based on their experience.

- **Thank You Communication:** Send a personalized thank you message, acknowledging their consideration of your school.
- **Future Engagement Options:** Offer options to stay connected with the school community, such as subscribing to a newsletter or attending public events.

# Conclusion

The journey through the admissions funnel is as diverse as the families and students who embark on it. In navigating this journey, the communication strategies you employ at each stage—from the initial “Enquired” leads to the final “Enrolled” students—play a critical role in shaping the experiences and decisions of prospective families.

Throughout this guide, we've explored:

- **Tailored Communication Strategies:** How to address the specific needs and contexts of each admissions stage.
- **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** The importance of using data to inform and refine your communication approach.
- **Continuous Plan Evaluation and Adaptation:** Tips for regularly assessing and improving your strategies to meet the evolving needs of your audience.

In implementing these insights, your school is not just filling seats but building a community, one family at a time. The efforts you put into understanding and engaging with each prospective family will reflect in the quality and commitment of the students who walk through your doors.

As you move forward, consider how these strategies can be integrated into your current admissions processes. Reflect on the tools and systems you have in place and how they can be leveraged to enhance your communication plan. Continual improvement and adaptation are key to maintaining a dynamic and effective admissions strategy that resonates with today's families.

Your journey in shaping the future of your school's community is ongoing, and the strategies outlined here are just the beginning.