

SCHOOL PROMOTION STRATEGIES

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Abstract: school promotion is a coherent strategy for communicating with its surroundings aimed at achieving its mission and goals. The basic type of activity that will allow school promotion is communication and entering into dialogue with the local community.

Keywords: promotion, school, cooperation, plan, development, aim.

Introduction

“Promotion” is a term defined differently. It is broadly identified with marketing. In a narrower sense, it is a set of activities and means by which an organisation communicates to the market information characterising a product. School promotion is aimed at several groups of customers. It is not only to current but also to potential customers of the school. The promotion must be carried out on the school's image, especially in the local environment. It is intended to generate interest in companies and institutions, “neighbours”, the activities of the school - and consequently to establish contacts to support the activities of the school. It is supposed to trigger the demand for participation in its life through sponsorship, donations and volunteering. The aim of the undertaken actions is to exist in the environment, to cause positive reception and recognition of the school.

1. Benefits that the school will achieve through promotion

Organised, consistent and skilfully conducted school promotion plays an increasingly important role in the conditions of formation of the market for educational services (because it is still a process of building a market for education). We are focused on the benefits that will result from the activities undertaken while conducting promotional activities.

The first countable benefit is increased recruitment. If we reach potential customers and our offer arouses interest, it can be expected that it will influence the choice of our school by children and their parents. We must remember that the offer should be more attractive than what the competing schools offer.

The second benefit is the improvement in the quality of school work. Because we want to meet expectations and beat the competition's offer, we must be a learning school, and we must change. Only through the involvement of teachers, dedication to children's problems and the search for innovative solutions, we can expect that motivating the students will contribute to their learning success. It should be remembered that quality is primarily determined by the customer. It is the expectations of students and parents that should inspire teachers to make changes and stimulate innovative actions and new solutions [Senge, 2013, p. 19].

Image creation is another benefit of conducting a promotion. The fact that someone goes outside with information about the school serves the purpose of talking about the school in the environment in general and appreciating the brand being developed well. The local community is informed that the school exists and something is occurring there. The environment, even if it is not interested in the school's offer, is aware of functioning in the surroundings of such an institution, thanks to the information about the undertaken activities and the atmosphere in the school, information about the attitude towards students and their problems.

One can have the impression that the image is created independently of the school. But nothing could be more wrong. It is actually created outside the school, and if we do not know the process of its creation, it seems to us that it is unknown where it comes from. This is especially true of the negative image of the school - where did it come from?

We do not remember minor and sometimes irrelevant incidents for teachers. One parent entered the school and was not stopped before entering the floor, another parent entered the teachers' common room during the break, and no one was on duty, the students tell us at home how the boys got beaten up during the break and the teacher was not there, or how they stayed alone during the lesson because the teacher went to get the diary... - and we wonder why there is an opinion in the community that the school is not safe. This is the main reason for the reputation problems. And it won't help that what we have under control can be great. We are successful in various promotional campaigns; hence there is a feeling that they should speak well of us. And yet the image is a laborious package of beliefs, impressions and reliable knowledge of different people about a given school. It may come from direct contacts and experience or heard information. The image is formed out of the school's control because it is based on the small experiences gathered by various people from contacts with the principal, teachers, as well as the janitor, which as rumours, stories, complaints or praise reach the local community.

Teachers need to be aware that every gesture, raised tone, unfair treatment of the student, untimely giving school grades or many other everyday activities create a school image [Gawroński, Kwiatkowski, 2018, p. 37].

The school aims to form its certain positive image. It takes many actions in this direction, prepares appropriate offers, and the puzzle is the fact that its image is different from the ideas, even though all the actions were successful - it is the effect of the lack of uniform

messages in the environment. Actions are received positively, but students say that teachers don't check their homework and they don't care about students, and parents say that teachers are not friendly. Such heterogeneous messages are a threat to a positive image. The school appears to be an unreliable institution and does not inspire trust.

The creation of such a mission and vision contributes to the school's image so that its positive qualities can be emphasised on a daily basis. These documents should be understood by the school environment and accepted by all groups. The presented value system should appear in the school curriculum and classroom programs.

2. Examples of promotional activities

It should be reminded that a promotion group should be set up before the start of targeted promotional activities and it is imperative that to ensure the success of the activities, a promotional action plan is drawn up taking into account all forms of promotion, the deadlines for their introduction and those responsible for them. All activities must be planned and monitored. The implementation of the concept of the promotion cannot be chaotic, because an uncontrolled additional image may appear, also perceived as an element of the promotion, forming the image of the school, although we did not plan to do so... and not always in a positive way.

The school must take into account the expectations of students and parents when targeting the local environment. It must be geared towards ongoing research of the needs of the school's clients, as the consequence of social change is the fluidity of needs. Monitoring of the needs of the environment must be carried out systematically and flexibly to adapt the arguments of promotion to changing expectations. If we are developing a long-term framework strategy for promotional activities, the need for change must be anticipated and taken into account. Promotional activities also have an educational function, forming expectations towards the school and influencing it. In addition to those already discussed, they will make the local environment aware of the need to take ecological measures, the need to take care of one's own health, the fight against childhood obesity or the need to learn a foreign language with increased hours.

As the environment does not have to share the school's opinion on such matters, awareness-raising activities should be foreseen and strengthened in the promotion. Feedback is a very important factor influencing the strategy and form of promotion. Forms of promotion are losing their strength in a dynamic environment, or once unnoticed, they begin to play an increasingly important role. It is also important to examine the effectiveness of particular forms of promotion. A good solution is the provision of various ways of monitoring the needs of the local environment. This will allow the offer to be tightly adjusted to the expectations of the local environment, flexible adjustment of activities to meet these expectations and needs.

All teachers must be involved in the promotion activities, as they largely create an opinion about the school through daily activities, contact with children and parents. The promotional activities plan should include a list of persons responsible for each activity, but in general, teachers should be responsible for the whole promotion. They evaluate the implementation of individual stages, modify them accordingly and influence the effectiveness of undertaken actions [Oczkowska, Bukowska, 2014, p. 19].

The offer should be interesting, attractive, and although it is to be addressed to each individual, it should be adjusted to the mass audience. Then it will gain more followers.

Promotion is not always conducted properly. The problems that prevent effective promotion may include:

- lack of analysis of customers' needs and expectations,
- preparing promotions which are too general – “for everyone”, instead of separating activities for particular groups, e.g. talented, in need of support, busy, etc.,
- teachers who are not looking for new forms of occurrence in the local environment, who are not looking for new didactic solutions that would encourage children and parents to use the offers,
- lack of attractiveness, discriminating factors. No specific and interesting offer,
- not using all available information technologies on a daily basis to inform the environment about undertaken actions, children's successes, projects implemented at school. During meetings with parents, traditional verbal methods are often omitted, and the focus is on digital communication,
- poor recognition of the offer of competing schools,
- the teachers' lack of understanding of the promotional process and awareness of the small elements that form the image of the school,
- lack of ability to conduct effective school promotion, lack of training in this area and the lack of using the results to the benefit of the school,
- lack of a promotion plan and often even no promotion group.

3. Cooperation of the school with institutions operating in the local environment

The local environment is an important partner for the school. On the one hand, it is a place of forming the image of the school, and on the other hand, it gives an opportunity to verify the image of the school. The image that functions in the environment and was built by teachers with great effort. The importance of the local environment for the proper implementation of substantive and social objectives has been growing in recent years. Parents' interest in this place (and its potential educational results) is also growing. However, parents and children often use popular opinions, rather than deliberately created and intended for them, before they deliberately undertake to get to know the chosen school. If opinions about

the school are not strong and satisfactory enough in the local environment, there will be no detailed offer at all. The school must take measures to form its image in order to function in a competitive market. A large part of the local community believes that the quality of educational services is a precious value and it is a shame to lose interest in the school's offer because of the not very good reputation in the community. The school will be perceived positively in the local environment when there are reasons to speak about it positively. Cooperation with businesses, organisations and institutions must be active for this to happen. A good solution is for school staff to visit the institution and discuss the possibilities of mutual cooperation.

These activities may be different, e.g.:

- students' trip to a selected institution and getting to know the scope of activities; © visits of employees of selected institutions and telling about work, presenting products,
- the organisation of workshop classes in a selected range, conducted by representatives of the workplaces,
- the organisation of exhibitions on the premises of a friendly institution, interior decoration and areas with the use of artwork made by children,
- making employee events more attractive with performances of children's groups, e.g. nativity play, stagings,
- inviting representatives of various institutions to school events and celebrations - a sophisticated role for the parents of students inviting colleagues, especially potential school clients,
- an announcement by manufacturing companies of art competitions with prizes for advertising ideas of indicated products (especially for peers),
- making posters advertising the company and selected products (signing the works with the author and school number),
- joint actions with home administration, housing association, e.g. cleaning up the environment, greening of areas, cleaning of green areas (raking, weeding),
- visiting elderly people in nursing homes, organising performances and preparing gifts by children,
- presentation of religious and occasional stagings in the church,
- exhibition in church of students' works related to church holidays, e.g. exhibition of nativity scenes, Easter sticks, Easter eggs, Christmas cards,
- inviting priests to school events and celebrations,
- sponsorship of prizes in competitions of a religious nature,
- receiving donations of equipment useful to the school,
- sponsorship is increasingly finding a place in schools. It is performed by the school and as an inverted promotion. It is often the company's concern that a positive gesture

towards the school should turn into a positive image of the sponsor. The school gains certain material goods and takes advantage of the fact that it is talked about because school events are accompanied by the sponsor's signs (logo),

- exposure during school events - on banners, notice boards, on decorations - sponsors' signs,
- patronage - it happens that some institution takes care of “young artists”. The patronage is related to financing and assistance in preparing costumes, transporting them to performances, paying for specialist classes, etc.

Each school has many institutions in its environment that are willing to cooperate with (or need to cooperate with - which described below). It is important to avoid the chaos of randomness of the action with the variety of forms of such cooperation. It is necessary to act according to the plan and consequently count on great effects. It is important that the school undertaking cooperation has the ability to enter into relations with another institution and the idea of taking action together. A good solution is to draw up a joint action plan and implement it consistently [Budzyńska ao., 2009, p. 55].

Important institutions with which cooperation results from the law are the leading authorities, supervisory bodies, police, psychological and educational counselling centres, district examination commissions, sanitary and epidemiological station, OPS and other state/self-government institutions.

Cooperation with the leading authorities results from the implementation of the law. Mutual relations and cognition are formed during, among others:

- to acquaint students with the work of the offices,
- establishing contacts with the authorities through meetings of teachers and students with their representatives on the occasion of school ceremonies,
- co-financing of grants and educational or sports projects, © sponsoring prizes for competitions organised by the school,
- promotion of the school in the office through the preparation of occasional newspapers and photographic reports from events hosted by the municipality,
- promotion of the school on the website of the gmina office, the gmina internet portal.
- From the point of view of the school and parents, it is very important to cooperate with the authorities that care about safety in a broad sense. In the immediate vicinity, it will be the police, municipal/gmina guards, fire brigade - and here the range of activities can be very wide and locally vary considerably.

Examples of forms of cooperation:

- preventive actions in cooperation with the police, municipal/gmina guards, fire brigade (workshops, lectures for teachers, students and parents),
- conducting various actions concerning dangers and threats,
- trips to a nearby headquarters, learning about the work of policemen/firefighters,

- trips related to fire safety, learning about firefighter's work, seeing firefighter's vehicles and equipment of firefighting rooms,
- organising an examination for a bicycle and motorcycle card in cooperation with the police,
- organising a demonstration test evacuation using smoke in close cooperation with the fire brigade,
- participation of students in art and knowledge competitions organised under the patronage of these institutions.
- In order to provide equal opportunities and work with a capable child, the school cooperates closely with the psychological and pedagogical counselling centre, organising, among others, the following activities:
 - examining students for talents,
 - activities aimed at selected groups: training of educational skills, an aggressive child in the family, addictions of youth, etc.,
 - activities for capable, shy children with learning difficulties, other therapeutic activities, examinations and speech therapy.
 - The least spectacular activities result from the school's cooperation with the social welfare centre, and these are:
 - the organisation of prevention workshops for children, establishing a plan of work with the student's home environment,
 - co-financing of winter and summer recreation,
 - co-financing of student meals, providing ad hoc financial and material assistance,
 - co-financing of trips of students from poor families.

These support activities are very important for families. Covering the family with help, pointing out solutions to difficult problems, devoting time to a child and family influences the opinion about the school. Although these are not activities to put on a poster, they are important and testify to teachers' commitment to their pupils, their empathy and willingness to help.

For several years, activities have been carried out to improve the quality of educational and vocational counselling in schools, and interest in vocational education is growing again. To help students plan their educational and career path, schools must work with a variety of institutions, organisations, including non-governmental organisations, universities and employers.

At the local and regional level, cooperation between schools and enterprises is planned:

- the organisation of practical classes and apprenticeships for students,
- the organisation of internships for teachers, where it is important to improve competences, expand and update knowledge,
- joint professional qualification courses with employers,

- increasing the access of students and teachers to modern techniques and technologies,
- activities within the framework of professional counselling in cooperation with psychological and pedagogical counselling centres and universities.

4. Cooperation with lower secondary schools

The school's task is to systematically organise recruitment every year and reach out to potential candidates attending lower education institutions. Primary schools must reach the parents of preschoolers regarding recruitment. Gymnasium schools are interested in contacts with sixth-grade students, and high schools have to inform third-grade students of the gymnasium [Gawroński ao., 2008].

Establishing cooperation with schools of the lower educational level is an excellent way to interest students in the school and encourage them to learn about its offer. It is a good idea to appoint a person at school who is responsible for such cooperation. The coordinators of these activities with the cooperating schools should draw up a joint plan taking into account the calendar and needs of each school. Selected undertakings could be included in the educational plans of these schools, which would allow for systematic contacts and joint implementation of tasks. The educational stage is very important for the nature of cooperation. The functions of cooperation and the involvement of preschoolers in the cooperation look much different than the cooperation at the next educational stages, but always the information reaches parents, and it is the reason for talking about the school. Senior pupils from different schools can be involved in joint activities, events and excursions together, which will bring the pupils closer to each other and exchange information beyond the rigidly developed forms. This personal spontaneous exchange of information is often more important than leaflets specially prepared for promotional activities. Systematically planned contacts spread over the whole school year allow learning about the higher-level school, teachers and students in situations of joint work, workshops and interesting events. Such contacts form a positive attitude towards the cooperating institution and give a better chance to be chosen as a school for the next educational stage.

Cooperation can take various forms, such as:

- visits of preschoolers in order to familiarise children with the school atmosphere and premises,
- enabling 5-year-old children to have school life in interesting moments as a form of encouragement to be a pupil,
- the organisation of extracurricular activities between schools for students,
- care for younger students, doing homework, actions such as: All of Poland reads to children - volunteering,
- inviting each other to performances, parties, celebrations,

- inviting students of the lower educational level to participate in artistic activities: choir, music and dance group, theatre group, etc,
- organising joint trips to the theatre, cinema, museum,
- organising exhibitions of students' works (mutually),
- the organisation of integrative trips - educational, recreational,
- inviting children and pupils of lower levels of education to participate in specially prepared classes conducted by teachers,
- enabling children to take part in joint open-air events in the district and gmina,
- visits by representatives of the school to lower secondary schools to distribute folders, brochures and to present the school using computer technology,
- organising meetings with parents in order to present the offer and encourage them to choose this institution,
- participation of teachers in parental meetings of sixth and third grades of gymnasiums in order to interest parents in the future school,
- inviting students and parents to adaptation and integration classes.

Planned and regular meetings create favourable conditions for the exchange of experience, provide an opportunity for effective cooperation and harmonious inclusion of students in the school community of higher education level. Children and pupils who know the edifice, teachers and pupils of the cooperating school are more likely to choose this school.

It is worth rethinking the strategy of individual actions. The group responsible for cooperation with the local schools should take into account the conditions for effective direct promotion, such as good presentation, concrete and understandable presentation, ease of establishing contacts, good knowledge of presented material, ability to present the school and the offer in an interesting way (“from the head”).

5. School traditions

What gives a special character to each school is the cultivation of local, regional and national traditions. The tradition of the school is present in the educational programs and implemented in everyday work. This requires a calendar of events and school celebrations. Such studies are produced on August pedagogical councils, and the individual persons responsible for their implementation are assigned specific tasks. This is very important because the range of activities is very wide and there must be people who will take care of the whole and link the programs, projects implemented by a wide school community - all classes, teachers and parents [Zeller, 2006]. During the preparation of school events, new talents in various fields may be revealed. Active participation of students gives every child an opportunity for intellectual development. The desire for more and more interesting presentations and performances results in the selection of new, sophisticated forms, often with

the participation of students and parents, which teaches team integration, empathy and creates positive emotions. Pupils learn independence and responsibility, and parents see the great work of the teaching staff and its impact on children's mental development. These elements of the school's work affect the local environment. On the one hand, not only parents, but also other family members and neighbours are involved in helping with the events, and on the other hand, information about interesting undertakings, creative teachers, undertaking by the school activities influencing the development of children and forming the skills of leisure time management, permeates the environment, otherwise and simply - taking care of the entrusted children. The most often organised class, school and community celebrations include:

- Students swearing-in ceremony,
- Saint Andrew's Day; Saint Nicholas Day,
- Boy's Day,
- Grandparents Day,
- Valentine's Day; First Day of Spring,
- Earth Day,
- Family Day (Mother and Father),
- Children's Day, Sports Day.

Such events take place systematically every year, students, together with their tutors, prepare event scenarios, artistic programmes and project summaries. They integrate the school community because it is important to establish cooperation with parents.

Summary

For promotion to be effective, it must be based on a fair image of the school. This image depends to a large extent on the daily work of teachers. Promotional actions are thus the culmination of a great year-long effort. They are the result of the school's cooperation with parents and others. They are an expression of permanent efforts for a good name - at every step, at every moment in every detail. They are the fulfilment of a strenuous and continuous improvement of the quality of school work. This circumstance is associated with a change in teachers' awareness. The success of promotional activities is related to the degree of teachers' involvement, the adoption of an active attitude, and a desire for constantly new partners to cooperate.

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