**Draft for Discussion**

**Approaches to Strengthening Camp Enrollment**

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| **Background and Purpose**  Enrollment is the lifeblood of Jewish overnight camps. It is a primary goal and indicator of reach and impact. It is an important sign from the community and marketplace as to how your camp is seen. And, as the central source of revenues, it is the central contributor to the economic well-being of your camp. And, it is of significant importance to donors whose support is often linked to their camp growing enrollment.  Most Jewish camps face enrollment challenges at one point and almost all are interested in strengthening their future enrollment. This document is a brief summary of ways in which overnight camps can do so.  It is based on work through JCamp 180 with a number of camps, where previous versions of this document have been used, as well as with day and supplementary schools for which many of the same approaches apply. Although it touches on all elements of enrollment, the document is primarily focused on marketing and promotion.  The document can be used as a checklist against which to compare your camp’s current approach and/or to guide future approaches taken by your Boards and senior staff to manage your enrollment. It also is intended to help mentors help their camps diagnose enrollment challenges and opportunities and develop strategies to address them. I hope that this or a similar framework also can be used to document and enable access to enrollment best practices and resources.  Feedback is welcome and appreciated.  Michael Miloff, JCamp 180  August 1, 2013  [michael@miloff.com](mailto:michael@miloff.com),  **A.** |

**ENROLLMENT CHECKLIST AND SELF-ASSESSMENT**

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| **TOPIC** | **How well are we doing?** | **How important is this to us?** | **What are our next steps?** |
| **A. ENROLLMENT STRATEGY** |  |  |  |
| 1. Develop and update the Camp Enrollment Strategy |  |  |  |
| **B. RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION** |  |  |  |
| 1. Conduct retention analysis |  |  |  |
| 1. Conduct market research |  |  |  |
| 1. Undertake a return on investment (ROI) analysis for camper recruitment and retention |  |  |  |
| 1. Establish a camper enrollment data system to support recruitment and retention |  |  |  |
| **C. TARGET CAMPER SEGMENTS/GROUPS and THEIR MOTIVATIONS** |  |  |  |
| 1. Identify maximum camper population goal |  |  |  |
| 1. Identify priority target segments/groups |  |  |  |
| 1. Develop an understanding for each target groups with respect to their awareness, motivations and perceptions regarding camping and your camp |  |  |  |
| 1. Understand and develop responses to target group “objections” |  |  |  |
| 1. Prioritize which market segments to target |  |  |  |
| **D. MARKET POSITIONING and BRAND** |  |  |  |
| 1. Identify the competition and the relative strengths and weaknesses of your camp |  |  |  |
| 1. Determine your camp’s desired brand in the marketplace |  |  |  |
| **E. ENHANCING THE CAMP EXPERIENCE** |  |  |  |
| 1. Identify improvements to the camp experience that twill increase enrollment |  |  |  |
| **F. PRICE POSITIONING** |  |  |  |
| 1. Identify changes to pricing with the most beneficial impact on enrollment and net income 2. Continue to operate or even develop your own incentive programs |  |  |  |
| **G. MESSAGING** |  |  |  |
| 1. Develop messages tailored to each of your camp’s target groups. |  |  |  |
| 1. Develop “reasons to believe” |  |  |  |
| **H. PROMOTE THROUGH OTHERS** |  |  |  |
| 1. Encourage and support alumni parents, staff and campers to send their kids and make referrals to the camp |  |  |  |
| 1. Operate free or low cost programs that showcase the camp’s values, staff and approach |  |  |  |
| 1. Identify, create and leverage feeder systems during the non-camp year |  |  |  |
| 1. Encourage organizations affiliated with the camps (e.g., synagogues, JCCs, Kens) to promote the camp |  |  |  |
| 1. Promote the camp to organizations which serve concentrations of the camp’s target group |  |  |  |
| 1. Identify key “community” influencers and educate and engage them about the camp |  |  |  |
| 1. Hire a broker, (i.e., paid specialists/intermediaries) |  |  |  |
| 1. Encourage graduating “families” to find a replacement camper |  |  |  |

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| **TOPIC** | **How well are we doing?** | **How important is this to us?** | **What are our next steps?** |
| **J. PRIORITIZE VEHICLES TO COMMUNICATE WITH MARKETPLACE AND TARGET CUSTOMER GROUPS** |  |  |  |
| 1. Develop marketing materials that communicate your camp’s brand, key messages and reasons to believe to the priority target groups |  |  |  |
| 1. Operate a Parents’ ambassador program |  |  |  |
| 1. Support and leverage Board staff and alumni to serve as ambassadors. |  |  |  |
| 1. Provide incentives for parents, alumni and others for successful referral of campers |  |  |  |
| **K. SELLING** |  |  |  |
| 1. Design and execute an effective selling process |  |  |  |
| **L. LINKS TO FUNDRAISING** |  |  |  |
| 1. Ensure a synergistic relationship between enrollment and fundraising |  |  |  |
| **M. ORGANIZATION** |  |  |  |
| 1. Ensure key organizational and infrastructure elements are in place to support effective management of enrollment |  |  |  |

1. **ENROLLMENT STRATEGY**
2. **Develop and update the Camp Enrollment Strategy**

Each camp should have an explicit enrollment strategy as part of its overall strategic plan. The strategy would:

* + 1. both leverage and identify the type of ongoing research that would be undertaken. (See Section A)
    2. address the marketing, pricing, programming and enrollment drivers discussed in Sections B to K.
    3. be linked to fundraising (Section L)
    4. set out the organizational and systems supports for enrollment building activities (Section M)
    5. prioritize and focus attention and resources on the critical issues.

A sample table of contents is appended.

1. **RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION**
2. **Conduct retention analysis.** Jewish overnight camps have retention rates that are typically 10% or less than private camps with predominantly Jewish populations. A 5% increase in retention rates – e.g., from 78% - 83% - can increase enrollment by 25-35% after seven years.

Camps shouldanalyze their retentiondata to understand if there is any significant attrition for any age, gender or other sub group, and direct attention to areas of high attrition. Analysis should be undertaken of reasons for low and high retention. Typically, problems/strengths are not random and are related to particular cabins/counselors and/or social groups; his can pinpoint where camp attention should be invested. The best payoff is from increasing retention rate for the youngest campers in order to increase total number of campers (and enrollment fees) over the long run.

1. **Conduct market research** as it will provide critical input to developing and implementing the camp’s enrollment and marketing strategy. Potential research includes:
2. Understand broader societal trends which may be affecting enrollment and what their implications for your particular target groups. Such trends include: local population, migration and demographic trends, economy and affordability’ environment, (ever increasing) government policies and regulations that bear upon camps; and internet, mobility and other technology
3. Analyze annual new recruitment rates for each age and gender group
4. Conduct an annual parent and camper survey of satisfaction and factors influencing their decisions
5. Conduct an exit phone survey of parents who do not re-enroll their children for reasons other than “graduating”
6. Conduct phone survey of persons who show an interest in the camp (e.g., inquire, attend an open house, phone call) but do not ultimately send their child
7. Conduct an annual staff survey including questions on their perceptions of factors affecting camper satisfaction and enrollment
8. Conduct an annual survey of any key influencers on parent decisions and their attitudes to the camp
9. Identify strategies other camps and competitors are using to maintain and attract enrollment, including program offerings, session lengths, pricing and marketing.
10. Track how people learn about the camp and the results of different marketing strategies in order to determine the optimal investments.
11. **Undertake a return on investment (ROI) analysis** **for camper recruitment and retention** to determine how much net income is associated with keeping or gaining a new camper. This will help provide insight as to how much the camp might invest in acquiring new and retaining existing campers. For example, if the net income per camper session after taking into account tuition fees, average subsidy and consumable expenses such as food and supplies is $1,000 and it Is assumed that each new or retained camper leads to one other referred family member or friend, ($2,000) and that the average stay at camp is 4 years, then the life cycle net income per new camper would be on the order of $10,000.

An investment of $25,000 in any given year for marketing, programming, staffing or other enrollment boosting activity would produce a profit even if only 3 new campers are gained – though it would take some time for the upfront investment to be repaid. A one-time $10,000 investment that produced 10 new campers would produce a break-even cash position in Year 1 and $100,000 over five or six years. Don’t be afraid to invest in smart enrollment building strategies!

1. **Establish a camper enrollment data system to support recruitment and retention.** This includes at least two systems:
2. A system for maintaining records of campers who are enrolled by age, gender, cabin and unique name/identifier (sometimes kids have the same names) and whether or not student is on financial aid. Most conventional camp software does this or can easily export to Excel or another tool where relevant data can be rapidly added.
3. Maintaining a system for tracking inquiries. A contact management system is an important vehicle for research and ongoing management. It will help track inquiries, families in various states of interest, people to contact, if/when to contact, result of contact, relevant information, plan for contact.
4. **TARGET CAMPER SEGMENTS/GROUPS and THEIR MOTIVATIONS**
5. **Identify the maximum camper population goal.** It is important to establish target maximum numbers for each session. Establishing the maximum target number of campers is critical to facility planning and fundraising as well as staffing and programming. It is dependent on net income objectives, concepts of community scale and intimacy, legal requirements, facility and infrastructure capabilities.
6. **Identify priority target segments/groups.** These can be identified on the basis of various dimensions, for example:

* *Geography* – near headquarters city, other cities, big city vs. town, Israel vs. local
* Socio-economic – family education, income, household structure (e.g., percent of single parent families) immigrant status, language and ethno-cultural background, including Russian, Israeli etc.
* *Jewish practice/affiliation* - including attitude to Israel and Jewish life
* *Families associated with organizations* with which the camp is associated - for example, Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Bnei Akiva, Orthodox and related synagogues and related organizations, plus international movements such as Hadassah, Habonim Dror, Hashomer Hatzair, JCCA etc..
* *Connected to camp* – children of alumni campers, staff, volunteers and/or other people associated with the camp or affiliated organizations
* *Other values and aspirations*– e.g., related to social justice, environment, social inclusiveness, skills development etc.
* Extent to which the camp services those with *physical or mental challenges*
* *Age and permanent residence* - Younger campers who will stay for several years is the preferred target.
  + Need to consider the relative priority for pursuing persons who might be older or not be planning/able to come for more than one or two years (e.g., families on sabbatical)

1. **Develop an understanding for each priority target group** with respect totheir a**wareness, motivations and perceptions regarding camping and your camp**, for example, as illustrated below.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Priority Target Group #1 | Priority Target Group #2 | Priority Target Group  #N |
| 1. What is most important to this group in terms of how their children spend their summers? (e.g., skills development, social, safety, fun, schedule, Jewish identity etc.)\* |  |  |  |
| 1. What do children of this group typically do in the summer? |  |  |  |
| 1. What does this group think/feel about overnight camping in general? |  |  |  |
| 1. What does this group think/feel about Jewish overnight camping? |  |  |  |
| 1. How much do members of this group know about your camp? |  |  |  |
| 1. What are this group’s perceptions of your camp?  * Positive… * Negative… * Comparisons to other camps and recreational options… * Incorrect assumptions… * Objections and concerns (See next Section too)… |  |  |  |
| 1. How much do you know about this group and their perceptions? How could you find out more about this segment? |  |  |  |

* As children get older, they (e.g., teens) will get more directly involved in decision-making. Each group may be subdivided into different ages and groups as there will not be a monolithic response across groups.

1. **Understand and develop responses to target group “objections”.** Often families with positive regard about your camp will have questions or objections (e.g., camp is too expensive, or doesn’t have enough programming or has too much structure, or isn’t Jewish enough or is too Jewish, is too modern or too basic, uses too much technology or not enough etc.).

Effective sales develops effective responses to objections or FAQs that all persons “selling” the camp are able to use when the issues come up. Such responses should be integrated into marketing materials including the web site so as to address concerns in a proactive way.

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| --- | --- |
| **Objection/Question** | **Response** |
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1. **Prioritize the market segments to target.** Camps have limited financial and human resources and they should be invested in pursuing priority target groups. Priority ones should be identified on the basis of the following factors.

* potential numbers likely to enroll over the short and long-run
* feasibility of reaching the target group and persuading them to register their children
* cost of reaching the target group
* cost of serving the target group including programming, staffing, facilities
* impact of serving this group on the camp’s ability to market/serve other groups
* impact on net income (e.g., taking into account financial aid, above cost factors, fundraising implications)
* impact on volunteers and Board functioning of shifting the mix of families (e.g., from different communities or groups) than have been served in the past
* ability to cost-effectively reach and serve the target group on a sustained basis

**D. MARKET POSITIONING and BRAND**

1. **Identify the competition and the relative strengths and weaknesses of your camp.** These strengths and weaknesses should be defined with respect to the priority target groups for your camp and their key decision-making factors.

Competitors do include other overnight summer camps including ones that are non-profit, Jewish focused, those which are private with predominantly Jewish clientele and other private overnight camps, including specialized ones. Competitors also include: Israel experiences, programs and family trips; specialized and other day camps, schools running extended summer programs, teen trips to Europe, family resorts and cottaging and other summer recreational programs

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***In reference to your camp’s priority target groups and***  ***their priority decision-factors*** | | | |
| **Name of Competitor** | **Relative Strengths** | **Relative Weaknesses** | **Implications for your Camp** | **Potential Actions** |
| Competitor 1 |  |  |  |  |
| Competitor 2 |  |  |  |  |
| Competitor n |  |  |  |  |
| Overall Summary |  |  |  |  |

1. **Determine your Camp’s desired brand in the marketplace**, i.e., what promise does it make to its customers. Make sure to identify the distinctive benefits and experiences **which your Camp offers.**

Your brand should:

* *Reflect your camp’s vision* – the promise it makes to its customers
* *Be economically relevant* – resonates with market segments that have the economic means to pay fees
* *Be competitively positioned* – offers distinctive value for $
* *Build on your camp’s strengths*
* *Address misperceptions, questions and “objections”*
* *Be authentic, realistic and believable* – you do (or readily can) truly deliver on it. The customer experience reinforces the brand.
* *Grab attention in a competitive marketplace*
* *Be sustainable over time –* takes into account your competition, resources, marketplace trends
* *Be clear* – can be readily communicated to the marketplace
* *Be adaptable –* 1) to reach multiple types of target segments, 2) evolve over time to reflect changing circumstances 3) be extended to sell future services (e.g., family camping) 4) reinforces the brand of parent or affiliated organizations 5) is meaningful to current and prospective families plus staff and donors 6) can be delivered through multiple promotional vehicles
* *Be reinforced in the experience that campers, staff, parents, donors, vendors and others have of your camp* – it is not just a tagline

**E. ENHANCING THE CAMP EXPERIENCE**

1. **Identify improvements to the camp experience that will increase enrollment**

In the long-run, positive word of mouth is critical to your brand and enrollment success. This, in turn, is based upon the experience of campers and their families in light of their expectations, hopes and concerns. Key factors driving positive experiences include:

* + Recruitment, training, and supervision of cabin, specialized and managerial staff and their ability to promote a positive culture, lead activities, facilitate social interactions etc.
  + Enhancement of land, water, educational and other programs
  + Enhancement of Judaics and Israel programming
  + Culture, processes and ways of strengthening campers’ social experience.
  + Operation of effective health services
  + Effective and responsive communications with parents about their child
  + Quality healthfulness and variety of food
  + Clean, convenient bathrooms
  + Facilities, including cabins, programming areas, dining hall, waterfront and infrastructure
  + Perceived overall value proposition – which takes into account customers’ perceived total value of the experience compared to the price and alternative value propositions offered by competitors

Annual surveys of parents and campers provide valuable insight into areas which your constituencies value, how well you are doing and where further camp attention is required.

Improvements in the camp experience will vary with respect to their impact on enrollment. Of course, the decision if and what changes to make is dependent on many factors including cost, affordability, competing priorities and so forth. Each of the above areas, of course, could be the subject of substantial analysis and action.

**F, PRICE POSITIONING**

1. **Identify any changes to pricing that would have the most beneficial impact on enrollment and net income.** This applies to:
   1. Tuition by session
   2. Sibling and other discounts
   3. Early bird discounts
   4. Incentives
   5. Subsidies and financial aid

Any pricing changes should be clear, easy to implement, and be integrated, including with third party incentive programs. They should take into account the competitive environment.

Many camps are concerned that increases in price – even at inflation – will result in decreased enrollment. Other camps believe that prices should be maintained at least at the rate of inflation and subsidies and incentives used to support those who cannot afford the price. Some camps use seasonal pricing (e.g., for financial aid) to balance session numbers.

It is important to estimate the impact of increased revenues from full paying customers versus the loss of revenues from those who do not return because of pricing.

1. **Continue to operate or even develop your own incentive programs** if you are running lower than capacity. These include Top Bunk, local Federation programs, PJ Library and others, for example, those operated by movements and synagogues.

Remember incentive programs are not real costs unless there is a waiting list of full paying customers for the cabin which will host the incremental camper, or the price paid by the “aided” camper is so low that food and other per camper variable costs (~ $500-$700 for a one month session) are not fully covered.

Consider developing your own incentive programs targeted to priority groups or to times of the summer for which you want to improve occupancy. Incentive programs gives recruiters and parent ambassadors tools that can energize and enhance their ability to market and sell.

**G. MESSAGING**

1. **Develop messages tailored to each of your camp’s target groups.** These messages should reflect the Camp’s market positioning and brand, convey its relevant strengths to priority market groups and answer objections.
2. **Develop “reasons to believe”.** Reasons to believe are the persuasive evidence that make your messages believable and compelling. Reasons to believe include:
   1. *Facts about your camp* - e.g., number of campers, growth, famous alumni
   2. *Research* – e.g., impact of Jewish camping on identity
   3. *Survey results* – e.g., what campers and parents love about your camp
   4. *Points of comparison* – e.g., what your camp does better than everyone else, price comparisons
   5. *Pictures, videos and audio* – e.g., pictures of a beautiful setting, video of happy, active kids, audio of a Rosh or Camp Director explaining camp philosophy
   6. *Quotes and testimonials* – e.g., from campers, staff, alumni, respected community leaders, donors
   7. *Presentation Quality* – language, graphics, execution and context in which messages are delivered should reinforce the brand and confidence that the camp will deliver on its promises
   8. *Policies* – which demonstrate camp thoughtfulness regarding the implementation of its stated values
   9. *Words, images, symbols which resonate with the target market groups*

**H. PROMOTE THROUGH OTHERS**

1. **Encourage and support alumni parents, staff and campers to send their kids and make referrals to the camp.** This can mean addressing their concerns as well as reminding them of camp strengths. Although alumni often do have strong, positive feelings about the camp, some may feel the camp of their day is not appropriate for their children and are not aware of how the camp has evolved.

Staff who came up through the ranks typically have strong relations with the camp and both they and their parents can be valuable groups to engage in sending their children or referring the camp to others.

Alumni can be given template letters with key messages, answers to frequently asked questions and referral bonuses to facilitate their recruitment and referral activities.

1. **Operate free or low cost programs that showcase the camp’s values, staff and approach.** These could include winter camps, Shabbaton, Israel education programs, and “taste of camp” experiences. A primary focus should be parents with young children.
2. **Identify, create and leverage potential feeder systems during the non-camp year.** The most direct feeder systems are supplementary schools, day camps and youth and teen programs run by the camp, or more, likely by a parent or affiliated organization. These feeders provide powerful opportunities for participating young people and their families to gain a taste of the camp (e.g., go to camp for a weekend, have a camp-like experience in the city over the weekend, or attend a camp sponsored Shabbaton) and generally market the camp to a constituency likely to have positive feelings to the camp given its association with affiliated organization.

Camps also can create their own feeder programs, for example, operate a “taste of camp” program that is open to anybody. Some camps run winter camps at preferred try it out prices that also attract a wider constituency.

1. **Encourage organizations affiliated with the camps (e.g., synagogues, JCCs, Kens) to promote the camp**. Such organizations can be encouraged and supported to undertake such activities as those noted below.
   1. Allow posters to be hung and brochures to be distributed on their premises
   2. Invite the camp to make presentations to their Board, staff, constituencies and customers
   3. Enable the camp to offer and market “taste of camp” experiences to their customers
   4. Offer joint programs with the camp (see above)
   5. Publish a positive story about the camp in their newsletters and media
   6. Offer subsidies and incentives to their members who attend camp
   7. Use their staff to teach a skill or an aspect of Judaism at the camp
   8. Use camp staff to operate their non-camp season programs focused on youth and their families
2. **Promote the camp to organizations which serve high numbers of the camp’s target group.** Ideally, these organizations will recognize that serving their own members/customers will be enhanced by enabling access and promoting their relationship with the camp. It often is difficult to establish a proprietary relationship as many non-profit organizations not aligned with a denomination or national movement will feel they need to be fair to all camps; however, developing a strong relationship may lead to some preferred treatment.
3. **Identify key “community” influencers and educate and engage them about the camp.** In addition to friends, parents rely upon respected others for advice around camps. Make sure that such persons know about and have positive views of your camp. They include:
   1. Rabbis and Directors of Supplementary Schools
   2. Day School Principals and Guidance Counselors
   3. Key staff at a JCC
   4. Editor of local media and children’s resource directories
   5. Local Federation and education leaders
   6. Social influencers
4. **Hire a broker, (i.e., paid specialists/intermediaries**) who provide advices to parents, for a fee, about what camps or other summer activities to which to send their children
5. **Encourage graduating “families” to reach out to find a replacement camper.**

**J. PRIORITIZE VEHICLES TO COMMUNICATE WITH MARKETPLACE AND TARGET CUSTOMER GROUPS**

1. **Develop marketing materials (text, graphics/videos) that reflect your camp’s brand and communicate your key messages and reasons to believe to your priority target groups.** This involves promoting directly to those groups as well as to intermediaries described above. Resources are limited so marketing/outreach/communication vehicles should be prioritized to those with the best return on investment of time and money recognizing the significant life cycle net income which arises from every individual new customer. (See Item 4). These vehicles include:
2. Web and Social Media
   * 1. Information and interactive opportunities on one’s own site
     2. Facebook, Twitter, Utube and other social media
3. Posters and brochures in building
   * 1. Place posters and brochures in one’s own physical space, that of allied organizations, and in other indoor and outdoor spaces where potential target group members will be.
4. Answering machine phone messages
   * 1. Should promote the virtue of camping and the camp, anything new this season
     2. During critical recruitment windows, opportunities for placing phone messages on allied organizations should be pursued
5. Advertising
   * 1. in local Jewish newspaper media, web sites and institutional bulletins (e.g., synagogues) or even local, general neighborhood papers where there are higher concentrations of Jewish families with young children.
     2. For most camps, mainstream print, radio or television media is prohibitively expensive.
   1. Public Relations – are persuasive, third party proof of “reasons to believe” camp messaging and is very important. Public relations include “stories”, interviews, profiles in Camp e\_newsletter on program benefits and innovations in
      1. media of parent or affiliated organizations
      2. local, neighborhood (non-Jewish) papers with high concentrations of target groups
      3. the local Jewish community/Federation newspaper
      4. on your and others’ web sites
      5. in the package of materials you send families
6. Email to Prospective Parents
   * 1. E-blasts and targeted emails regarding camp program, benefits, what’s new and an invitation to talk to the camp director
     2. Send notes to targeted families around holidays with useful information
7. Contact with current families
   * 1. The most effective means of building enrollment is high retention. Good communication with parents – including phone calls - during the non-camp season (as well as camp season obviously) demonstrates interest and can identify any family concerns for which mitigating action can be taken.
     2. Connect with current and prospective campers through personalized communications, for example, wishing them happy birthday or providing tailored holiday greetings
8. E\_newsletters
   * 1. Send e\_newsletters to “friends of camp” outlining with benefits of camp and encouraging them to share with potential prospects: highlight any referral bonuses
9. Direct mail of brochure and letter from Director or Board Chair
10. Phone (by Director, senior staff, Committee member or parent ambassadors) and follow-up by prospective member parents to inform them about the camp, and invite them to learn more from an in person event materials
11. In Person sessions
    * 1. Hold parlor meetings, open houses and “Schmooze with Camp Director and/or Senior staff “ sessions
      2. Tours of camp
      3. Family days for prospective parents
12. Participation in Camp or Local Education Fairs
13. **Operate a** **Parents’ ambassador program**. The most successful marketing is through word of mouth and the most valuable word of mouth is from current parents. A “Parent Ambassador” program help energize and structure word of mouth. Staff or lay leaders can organize such a program which could consist of the following:

* A group of parents who are enthusiastic about the camp and willing and committed to marketing it.
* Ideally, the parents are each assigned to a constituency (e.g. Synagogue, area of the city etc.) where they have networks
* Activities of Parent ambassadors typically include:
  + Provide volunteer support to open houses and other marketing events
  + Identify and contact prospective parents in order to tell them about the camp
  + Represent the camp at institutions where they have a relationship and can speak to their members
  + Produce content for local media
  + Host in their home an event to welcome prospective or new parents
* Parent ambassadors do need guidance, training, management and support

1. **Support and leverage Board staff and alumni to serve as ambassadors.** Staff also can be great program ambassadors. A capable staff who grew up in and is positive about the camp will inspire the confidence of parents – i.e., that the camp produces fine, young people. Alumni campers, staff and parents also should be encouraged, through e\_newsletters and other communications, to promote the camp among their networks. Board members also have networks which they can and should use to promote the camp.
2. **Provide referral incentives for parents, alumni and others who refer campers who land up attending the camp**

**K. Selling**

1. **Design and execute an effective selling process** which maximizes the conversion of interested families into those who actually enroll their children.

Effective marketing, ideally, will drive individuals to be interested in enrolling their children in the camp. Although some people may directly register their child, others will want to obtain more detailed information and get specific questions answered, often as it pertains to the unique aspects of their children.

Ideally, camps will establish a continuum of potential interactions with the parents, so that interested families can easily proceed to a next step of learning more about the camp, feeling comfortable and positive about enrolling their child.

The camp “sales” process should be well designed and executed, and include some or all of the following elements.

* Open houses, individual meetings with the Camp Director or group coffee/schmoozes, and tours perhaps just before or after camp starts. Most camps state they have a high “closing” rate from people who attend an open house. Thus, encouraging people to come to an open house should be a high priority. Indeed, it is an easier sell to invite someone to learn more about your camp then it is to register (without having full information) at your camp. Having open houses and other vehicles to learn more about your camp is an excellent way to empower the recruitment process and your ambassadors.

Separate activities are useful for youth of different ages. This will allow more time for adults to speak to camp staff and also to see if/how their kids are enjoying camp like activities Older kids also may help influence the decision and so designing a good experience for them is important.

* A variant is to hold a community event, Shabbaton or bowling evening, to which current and prospective camp families are invited.
* Parents often will want and, indeed, will talk to other parents or a member of affiliated/parent institutions (e.g., Rabbi, Educator), specialized staff or a Board member. Although many of these discussions will be informal, some can be proactive supported through the use of referrals to these groups and/or parent ambassadors. Certainly, camp friends and ambassadors should be equipped with key information and responses to typical questions.
* The camp should have a process for referring inquiries to the right person, whether it be the Director of Recruitment or the Camp Director: and, they, in turn should have a process for referring to other key influencers.
* There should be a good process and contact management system for tracking and following up interest shown through inquiries, participation in open houses etc..

**L. LINKS TO FUNDRAISING**

1. **Ensure a synergistic relationships between enrollment and fundraising.** Increasing enrollment and, therefore, camp reach and impact, is an important motivator for many donors. In return, targeted donations can strengthen enrollment.

Subsidy, incentive and scholarship funds are a prime example of this synergistic relationship. Often investments in cabins or enlarged dining halls are designed to expand enrollment capacity. Many camps have raised dollars for specialized programming and related facilities (e.g., ropes) on the basis that this will enable the camp to more competitively attract and retain campers.

Fundraising events can also be used to promote the benefits of the camp to community influencers and leverage their good will to promote the camp to their networks

**M. ORGANIZATION**

1. **Ensure key organizational and infrastructure elements are in place to support effective management of enrollment**, for example:

* A calendar of marketing and other enrollment functions should be maintained and updated on an annual basis.
* Staffing should be dedicated and roles and responsibilities should be clear for all the enrollment related functions. Many camps have a full time Registrar who plays some of these roles, but, the reality is that the Camp Director and senior staff also will be very involved. Administrative staff may play a significant role in conducting analyses , tracking and fielding inquiries in a welcoming and effective way. Persons involved in fundraising often have expertise at communications and may provide some assistance.
* The responsibilities of the Board and Committees also should be clear. Virtually every Committee – from Budget to Facilities to Programming to Alumni to Fundraising – should contribute to and be aware of enrollment goals and priorities. Further, each of these groups should consider how they can exercise their responsibilities in order to strengthen enrollment. Some camps have a separate Marketing Committee. Consideration should be given to having an Enrollment Committee which can address, in an integrated way, all of the relevant issues including Marketing. Boards typically spend time hearing and reviewing the latest “numbers”. At least some time at Board meetings should be dedicated also to addressing critical enrollment issues and strategies and providing overall strategic and policy guidance.
* Responsibilities of Board members to serve as ambassadors for the camp should be explicit.

**Appendix 1: Preliminary Draft Elements of an Enrollment Plan**

1. Purpose and Organization of Report
2. Context and Approach
   1. Rationale for strengthening enrollment
   2. Logic model – Drivers of Enrollment
3. Background
   1. Camp Description:
      1. Type of camp, current size, movement/affiliation, location
   2. Numbers
      1. Historical enrollment levels by session, age and gender
      2. Historical retention rates
      3. Mix of types of families/campers
   3. Other Key Drivers of Enrollment
      1. Pricing and subsidies
      2. Programming
      3. Staffing
      4. Facilities
      5. Food, Health, Operations
      6. Marketing and Public Relations
      7. Partnerships
   4. Ongoing enrollment research and data management
   5. Roles and responsibilities of Board Committees and staff around enrollment
   6. Results of surveys
      1. Parents, students, staff, exit, influencers, market, competition
   7. Summary of What has worked/not worked to maintain/grow enrollment
      1. Biggest successes, failures and lessons learned
   8. ROI analysis
4. Marketplace: Trends, Opportunities and Threats
   * 1. Customers
     2. Competition
     3. Partners
5. Enrollment Goals
   1. Long-term goals – by session
      1. Rationale
         1. Balancing of aspiration, feasibility, intimacy vs. scale benefits, costs of additional infrastructure/programming and how they will be financed
   2. Short-term goals – by session
      1. Rationale
6. Proposed Retention Strategies
   1. General and Jewish Programs – Any changes/improvements
      1. Program Offerings
      2. Staffing
      3. Timing and location, session structure
   2. Customer service and relations
      1. Parent communications
      2. Parent advisory groups and input
   3. Facility
   4. Pricing and discounts
   5. Other policies
   6. Ongoing data collection and analysis
   7. Return on Investment
7. Proposed Recruitment Strategies
   1. Target Groups and Mix
      1. Defined by age, geography, ethno-cultural and socio-economic characteristics, values and attitudes, relations to allied organizations etc.
   2. Branding
      1. Key value proposition
      2. Messaging and reasons to believe
   3. Program Offerings
      1. Jewish and Secular
      2. Timing and locational access, culture and language
   4. Pricing
   5. Marketing
      1. Media including web site, social media, advertising, posters, signage
      2. Public relations
      3. Leverage word of mouth: ambassador programs
         1. Parents, students, staff, alumni, board, friends, other allied institutions and partners
         2. Open houses
8. Proposed Organization and Systems
   1. Roles and responsibilities
      1. Professionals
      2. Volunteers
      3. Board reviews
   2. Links of enrollment strategies to fundraising, alumni outreach, strategic planning
   3. Tracking and systems
   4. Budget
9. Implementation Plan
   1. Roles and responsibilities: Who does what and when
   2. Monitoring progress
   3. Board reviews
   4. Advisory Groups